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EPISTLE

TO THE

Pye (H. J.)
K.

POET-LAUREAT.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1790.

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EPISTLE

TO THE

POET-LAUREAT.

OF all the Poets of our Iſle
Who rhyme for fame or fee,
Methinks our gracious Sovereign's ſmile
Was wiſely fixed on thee.

Thou,

Thou, who of poetry or Pitt
The merits canſt rehearſe,
Prepared alike to ſhow thy wit
By venal vote or verſe;

Or he the Patron of thy lays
To trumpet right or wrong;
On vice itſelf to laviſh praiſe
The triumph of thy ſong.

As the rank dung or fetid ſlime
Creates the fertile loom,
So on the very dregs of crime
The flowers of fancy bloom.

I hear

I hear the luſt of boundleſs ſway
Come ſoftened from thy lyre,
And dividends we cannot pay
All in a trope expire.

I ſee the mercenary fit
Of tuneful madneſs riſe,
The caitiff wretch for earth unfit
Exalted to the ſkies.

Methinks with rage at every line
A Britiſh breaſt ſhould glow,
And Britiſh hands diſdain to twine
The laurel round thy brow.

But where is this diſaſtrous train,
This Caitiff to be found?
Does not our commerce graſp the main,
Our revenues abound?

Even now, our unexhauſted ſtores
In endleſs channels flow;
Great George on us his bounty pours,
His vengeance on the foe.

There's nothing loſt; we vainly dream;
'Tis changed from hand to hand,
And flowing in one generous ſtream
Still nouriſhes the land.

The more deluded ſubjects groan
The greater ſtill we riſe,
Still pay the homage to the Throne
Of our proſperities.

Ah! prithee, ſpare thy country's wealth,
Nor laugh at our undoing;
Nor to that hand aſcribe our health
That could not work our ruin.

What is this vain proſperity,
This phantom of renown?
The ſecret of felicity
Is to enjoy our own.

'Tis

'Tis all fantaſtic mummery,
A mere deluſive glitter;
A bloated maſs of miſery,
A whited ſepulchre.

Each effort in purſuit of power
Precipitates decay;
We blaze the meteors of an hour,
We blaze and waſte away.

Like the famed tower that charms our eyes,
Poized by mechanic ſkill:
Or the bright ſcenery of the ſkies
Fraught with impending ill.

Proud as the brainleſs Lagatoes
We view the ſubject ball,
Unable to ſubdue our foes
We cruſh them with our fall.

What then upholds the mortgaged ſtate?
Unbounded energy.
Or reſcues from impending fate?
Bare intrepidity.

Shall he who ſeized our well-earned pelf
His ſubjects to invade,
Now claim as merits to himſelf
Our liberty and trade?

That nor remonſtrance, nor appeal,
Nor chartered rights reſtrain,
Boaſt of his patriotic zeal
When we thoſe rights maintain?

Or ſhall a Traitor to his Throne,
Though pardoned and forgiven,
His ſacrilegious guilt diſown
And point the way to Heaven?

So Stanley, who with cautious eye
Perceived the ſcale incline,
Might with an air of triumph cry,
" The victory is mine!"

Or

Or that fell Quack of deathleſs fame,
As ſome were ſtill alive,
With conſcious merit might exclaim,
" See how my patients thrive!"

Our wealth, however changed, is loſt
If nought but fame redound;
Tis the hard bread of labour toſt
To the voracious hound.

A change of government were loſs,
A loſs indeed ſevere;
'Twere to exchange the vileſt droſs
For all that is moſt dear.

For that even Hypocrites adored,
By dauntleſs valour led,
For which the Sage ſo oft explored,
For which the Hero bled.

But who, vain Bard, to thee revealed
The downfall of the State,
Or that in credit lies concealed
Inevitable fate.

'Twas he, who bad yon patriot band
With keen reſentment glow
Againſt the Spoilers of the land,
From whom theſe evils flow.

Who bad the Goth and hardy Pict
Boldly aſſert their own;
Bad Tyrants feel what they inflict,
And tremble on the throne.

Look round! Behold the book of fate
Is opened to our eyes;
See the decline of every ſtate
From its finances riſe.

Aſk thoſe who bow the ſupple knee
At proud oppreſſion's call,
Or thoſe determined to be free,
The American or Gaul.

They'll tell thee not the Deſpot's power,
Nor vices of the great,
But their own debts in evil hour
Have cruſhed them with their weight.

That 'twas the luſtre of the Crown,
'Twas Glory's wild career,
And all thoſe viſions of renown
That to their hearts were dear.

When none e'er dreams of battles nigh,
When peace protects our ſhores,
The Stateſman's penetrating eye
The future ſtorm explores.

The diſtant foe; he little thinks
Of thoſe whom friends we call;
But waits until Britannia ſinks
To intercept her fall.

The Culprit who his fate bemoans
Preſerves a healthful air;
With ſulphurous heat the mountain groans,
Yet all above is fair.

To prove at once the empire ſafe
Tell us thy ſack is clear;
Confirm the proverb, none ſo deaf
As thoſe who will not hear.

Tell how our Peaſants till their vines
Bleſt as Arcadian Swains:
How the poor man at eaſe reclines
Who yet a mite retains.

That all is proſperous and ſecure
Whilſt vengeance is delayed;
The Palm of victory is ſure
Whilſt hireling Bards are paid.

That floating ramparts guard our ſhores,
" Beware the written wall!"
Tell how Britiſh Lion roars,
" Prophetic of his fall!"

So

So ſhall the famiſhed pauper ſmile
Whilſt thou with Bays art crowned;
So ſhall the follies of our Iſle
All in thy Butt be drowned.

So ſhalt thou wade through thick and thin
To pour a mortal lay,
And plunge in falſhood to the chin
Thy Dullneſs to diſplay.

So ſhall thy unpoetic eye
In a vile phrenzy roll;
So ſhall the names of George and Pye
Be BLESSED from pole to pole.